Law Enforcement Management Institute

Boot Camps

A Review of Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department

A Research Paper

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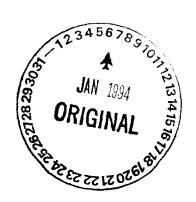


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Prologue

"For most of the twentieth century society put more emphasis on rehabilitating criminals than on punishing them. But in the mid-1970s, with mounting public concern about the threat of crime and growing skepticism about the effectiveness of rehabilitation, Americans began to focus on the purposes of prison-retribution and public safety. Today, however, prisons have become severely overcrowded, and policy makers are taking another look at rehabilitation and alternative correction programs." 1

One alternative correction program that is receiving attention is boot camps, a term previously associated with the military indoctrination of neophyte soldiers is now being used to describe an alternative program for the incarceration of non-violent offenders. Boot camps are a breed of correctional facilities which evolved out of concerns over increased drug, crime and prison overcrowding, and the belief that traditional prisons often fail to rehabilitate offenders. In addition, there has been growing public sentiment that offenders be held accountable for their crimes and that serious offenders serve longer sentences.

Yet, the question still remains in the minds of the American people, is this alternative approach the answer to a criminal justice system that has failed to rehabilitate or deter crime, or is it a more intensive punitive form of probation, that in turn will be more costly?

This paper will discuss the origin of boot camps and how this alternative approach attempts to address the problems of prison overcrowding, rehabilitation, recidivism and the reduction of correction costs. Additionally, we must discuss whether boot camps are a punitive form of probation or an alternative to incarceration. The methodology used will be a review of literature and an on site assessment of the Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department.

"Boot Camps - also known as shock incarceration, special alternative incarceration or regimented inmate discipline - are military style facilities distinguished by reveille, close-order drills, marching and demanding physical requirements. Participants are usually young adult offenders with no prior incarceration who are serving time for their first non-violent felony conviction. Offenders attend a boot camp program for a shorter duration than a standard prison sentence, sixty (60) to one hundred eight (180) days depending on the state program, and then ordinarily are released on parole for an additional year or more". ²

"Modern shock incarceration may be a child of the 1980's drawing on the worst personal memories of the South's corrections officers, but it does have roots in the 19th century. Aside from the informal practice of giving young offenders a choice of joining the army or serving time, precedent exists for the military-style prison. From 1888 to 1920, the New York State reformatory at Glmira was based on a military training model, which included five (5) to eight (8) hours a day of marching and executing the manual of arms." ³

In 1981, thoughts of reviving military-style incarceration was offered in a memo disseminated in the Georgia Department of Corrections. The idea came to fruition, and the first facility was built at the Dodge Correctional Institution in December of 1983. However, the State of Georgia was not the first to open a boot camp, Oklahoma built more quickly on Georgia's plan. The state of Mississippi opened the third boot camp.

"Fueled by the political attractiveness of the idea, with its clear expression of punishment and inculcation of discipline, the boot camp idea quickly spread. Now, over thirty states operate boot camps for young adult offenders. Most states with programs have added them since 1987, and considerable legislative activity has occurred since 1989. Sixteen states enacted enabling legislation in the 1989 or 1990 sessions: Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Eight states - Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, New York and South Carolina, enacted enabling legislation between 1983 and 1989. At least five states - Idaho, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina and Oklahoma - operate boot camps under department of corrections regulatory authority. One county, Los Angeles, operated a one year pilot project." 4

Summary

This report provides information on the Harris County Community Supervisions and Corrections Department Boot Camp program. Findings pertain to the first twenty-four months of the program's operation (September 1991 through September 1993) and represent data drawn from the Department of Corrections computerized database supplemented by written questionnaires and the boot camp's own inmate records. Among the findings are the following:

- 1. The typical inmate admitted to boot camp was a 19 year old unmarried male who acknowledged using illegal drugs and was convicted on a primary offense burglary or robbery and sentenced to 3.6 years in prison.
- 2. As compared with inmates who failed at boot camp for disciplinary or motivational reasons, inmates who graduated were slightly older, more likely to have completed high school, somewhat less likely to acknowledge using illegal drugs, and more likely to have been convicted of armed robbery or violent crimes on a first degree felony.
- 3. Of the 281 boot camp graduates, 90% consistently met or exceeded the basic requirements of the program in the areas of military drill, obstacle course, work assignment, dress code, substance abuse training, and counseling (rational-emotive therapy training). The vigorous physical training that inmates received generally improved their fitness.
- 4. The reincarceration rate of boot camp graduates was 25.3%, which compares favorably with the 27.8% for a matched inmate group. Accounting for the superior performance of the boot camp graduates was lower reincarceration rate for technical violations of probation. The graduates have shown no uniform superiority in recommitments to prison for new crimes, though some evidence suggests that the program may have a deterrent impact for some types of offenders but not for others.
- 5. New felonies committed by boot camp graduates were highly time clustered, with 57.5% occurring within the first four months after release from prison and 83.0% occurring within the first eight months. On the average, graduates with new felony commitments maintained "good" post-release behavior for 4.5 months, a figure virtually identical to that of the comparison group.

- 6. Reincarcerated boot camp graduates acknowledged problems with job skills, employment, and substance abuse.
- 7. In total incarceration time, graduates of boot camp served 19% of their sentences, compared to 32% for a matched inmate group. State prison time along constituted 13% of the graduates' sentences and 22% of the comparison group's. If graduates of boot camp had served 22% of their sentences in state prison, over 39,759 inmate days would have been added to the correctional system's load, at a cost of more than one and a quarter million dollars.

Introduction

"The Basic Training Program, informally known as Boot Camp, was implemented by the Harris County Community Supervisions and Corrections Department in the Fall of 1991. The program was devised as a form of shock incarceration modeled on military training. For a period of 90-120 days, up to 100 youthful male inmates participate in a rigorous daily routine of physical exercise, military drill, training and work assignments. Idle time is virtually eliminated. Inmates receive substance abuse counseling and training in psychological methods that promote responsibility and improve decision-making. The central objective of the basic training program is to deter repeat criminality by fostering productive and responsible life adjustments in a brief though intensive correctional experience representing significant cost savings to the state.

In September, 1992, the Department of Corrections released its first evaluation report on boot camp, covering the first twelve months of the program's operation (September 1991 through September 1992). In this second report, presents a review of the program's initial twenty-four months, extending the evaluation through the end of October, 1993. The chief aim is to update the information provided in the first report. Accordingly, the report will concentrate on a limited number of issues:

- 1. A profile of inmates admitted to boot camp
- 2. Different characteristics of inmates who succeed and those who fail in the program
- 3. Performance achievements of boot camp graduates
- 4. Repeat criminality among boot camp graduates
- 5. The program's effectiveness in reducing prison time

It must be strongly emphasized that this report bases its conclusions on data available as of September 30, 1992. Since boot camp is an ongoing program, conclusions will remain open to revision as dictated by current and future developments. *7

^{*} The Harris County Community Supervisions and Corrections Department is currently participating in a multi-state study of shock incarceration sponsored by the National Institute of Justice. Results of this project will supplement the Department's own internal research.

Getting In: Boot Camp Admissions

"Between the inception of the Basic Training Program in September, 1991, and the end of September, 1993, 648 inmates were accepted for admission. In this section we will recount the process through which these persons were recruited and then describe some of their demographic and offense characteristics.

Admission to boot camp generally proceeds through several steps. At the correctional reception centers, newly arrived inmates are screened for eligibility by classification officers. Names of suitable candidates are submitted to the Youthful Offender Program Office of the Department of Corrections for further Screening and approval. For each acceptable candidate, the Department requests permission of the sentencing court to admit the inmate to boot camp. While initiative in recommending candidates rests with the Department of Corrections, final authorization belongs to the judge. The full process from screening to approval takes an average of nearly two months.

By formal policy, inmates eligible for admission to boot camp must have been sentenced as youthful offenders under a section of the Harris County Statutes or designated by the Department of Corrections as youthful offenders. Such a designation may be accorded first-time inmates, twenty-four or younger upon prison classification, without capital or life felonies and sentenced to an incarceration term of ten years or less. Additional boot camp eligibility criteria require that candidates be male, have neither physical nor psychological limitations precluding participation in the program, and voluntarily agree to participate.

Conforming to these eligibility requirements, the 648 inmates admitted to boot camp during its initial twenty-four months have a number of other characteristics. A profile of the typical boot camp admission would show an inmate who was born in Texas, had not completed high school, had never been married, acknowledged using illegal drugs, was 19 upon entering prison, was convicted on primary offense of burglary or robbery and sentenced to 3.6 years of incarceration. Table 1 provides the full demographic and offense profile of the boot camp admissions."8

Table 1 *** Profiles of Inmates Admitted to Boot Camp Through September 30, 1993 (N-648)

* Average age upon admission to Boot Camp was 19

Race:

- * 50.5% are black
- * 48.3% are white
- * 1.2% are other
- * 69.4% were born in Texas
- * 4.6% claim to be Hispanic *

Most of the inmates:

- * had not completed high school
- * were single (never married)
- * admitted to using illegal drugs
- * 27.9% had at least one prior term of felony probation
- * 11.9% had at least one prior term of Community Control
- * 24.7% had violated probation or Community Control
 - * Were usually committed on the following offenses:
 - 1. Burglary (33.5%)
 - 2. Armed robbery (14.5%)
 - 3. Narcotics, sale or manufacture (10.3%)
 - 4. Unarmed robbery (7.9%)
 - 5. Auto theft/motor vehicle crimes (7.6%)
 - * 21.2% committed first degree felonies
 - * 48.5% committed second degree felonies
 - * Were convicted of 3.4 felony counts
 - * Were sentenced to 3.6 years of incarceration
- * This is an ethnic, not a racial, classification.
- ** Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department

"Having characterized the inmates who entered boot camp, we might ask whether they are typical or atypical of male offenders entering state prison. Table 2 lists demographic and offense statistics for the boot camp group in comparison with the same information for the youthful and adult males admitted to prison between October 1, 1991, and October 1, 1993. Here the focus is specifically on the differences between youthful male and boot camp admissions.

Generally, the boot camp group was younger, less educated, and more willing to acknowledge using illegal drugs than the youthful male prison admission cohort. Disproportionately included among boot camp admissions were inmates convicted on a first or second degree felony of robbery or burglary. Drug felons, by contrast, were under-represented at boot camp, due chiefly to the frequency of their shorter sentences. Sex offenders were (and are) excluded as a matter of informal policy." 9

Table 2

*** Boot Camp Admissions

Compared to Youthful and Adult Male Inmates Admitted

During Fiscal Year 1991-93

	Boot Camp Admissions	Male inmates 24 & Younger	Male inmates 25 & older
	(N=648)	(N=13242)	(N=24142)
Race: Black	50.5%	59.8%	58.7%
White	48.3%	38.8%	39.5%
Other	1.2%	1.4%	1.8%
Marital: Single	94.5%	89.9%	56.2%
Ethnic: Hispanic	4.6%	5.5%	8.2%
Completed high school	15.0%	26.5%	46.2%
Average age Admits to using	19	21	33
illegal drugs	61.1%	52.0%	44.3%
Prior probation Prior violation of probation or	27.9%	77.4%	89.7%
Community Control	24.7%	41.4%	35.6%
Primary offense of:			
Murder/manslaughter	2.5%	2.9%	3.6%
Sexual offenses	0%	2.5%	4.7%
Robbery Violent personal	22.4%	13.9%	7.8%
crimes	6.0%	5.7%	5.9%
Burglary	33.5%	24.7%	18.0%
Theft, forgery, fraud	4.6%	6.2%	10.0%
Drugs	14.5%	26.2%	34.7%
Weapons	1.1%	2.9%	2.9%
Other	15.4%	15.0%	12.4%
Felony class:			
Capital/Life	.0%	2.9%	2.5%
First degree	21.2%	14.4%	13.8%
Second degree	48.5%	43.9%	39.7%
Third degree	30.3%	32.7%	44.0%

One or more prior prison terms	.0%	31.0%	44.0%
Mean sentence length (in years)	3.6	3.8**	4.4**
Median sentence length (in years)	4.0	2.5	2.5

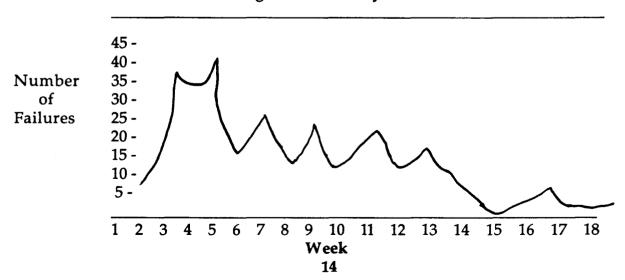
^{*} These figures are estimates based on samples.
** These averages exclude inmates sentenced to life in prison or death.
***Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department.

Hanging On: Succeeding or Failing at Boot Camp

"Of the 648 inmates who had been admitted to boot camp as of September 30, 1993, 53 were still in the program on that date. Three inmates were temporarily out in court, and two others were released early with an expired sentence. All of the others had either graduated or terminated. Graduates numbered 281, or 47.5% of the 592 inmates released from the program. Of the inmates who were terminated, 41 (6.9%) left for medical reasons, 6 (1.0%) for psychological reasons, and the remainder (262, or 44.3%) for either an inability or unwillingness to meet the requirements of the program. It is this group, the genuine program failures, that we will consider in more detail.

An inmate who failed at boot camp spent an average of 41 days in the program, compared with 29 days for medical terminations, 12 days for psychological terminations, and 103 days for graduates. More than half of the failures occurred during the fifth week or earlier; by the end of the seventh week, over two-thirds of the failures had occurred. Chart 1 displays the failure count by the week of its occurrence.

Chart 1 Program Failures By Week



In comparing the inmates who failed with those who graduated, we note a number of differences. While individuals in both groups entered the program at about the same physical size, successful inmates performed better in initial exercise tests. Table 3 provides the size and exercise data for both groups.

Table 3

Average Initial Physical Measurements for Graduates and Failures

	<u>Graduates</u> (N=281)	<u>Failures</u> (N=262)
	(2 * 45 2)	(= 1 = 1 = 1,
Weight (in pounds)	160.8	158.9
Waist (in inches)	31.9	32.0
Chest (in inches)	37.2	36.9
Heart rate (beats per minute)	73.2	75.6
Time in one mile run	8.1	8.8
(in minutes)		
Push-ups (in one minute)	47.0	42.1
Sit-ups (in one minute)	37.2	35.3

In addition to physical performance, successful and unsuccessful inmates at boot camp differed in a number of other respects. Compared with the program failures, graduates were slightly older, more likely to have completed high school, and less likely to acknowledge use of drugs. Graduates also had a higher offense rate for armed robbery and violent crimes, and a higher conviction rate for first degree felonies. While Hispanics made up only a small portion of the boot camp admissions, they were disproportionately represented among the graduates. Table 4 contains the comparative profiles of successful and unsuccessful boot camp inmates.¹⁰

Table 4 ***Comparative Profiles of Graduates and Failures

	<u>Graduates</u> (N=281)	Failures (N=262)
Race: Black	51.6%	48.9%
White	47.0%	50.0%
Other	1.4%	1.1%
Average age at prison		
admission	19.2%	18.7%
Ethnic: Hispanic	5.3%	2.7%
Uses illegal drugs *	58.8%	63.2%
Primary offense:		
Burglary	29.9%	37.4%
Unarmed robbery	8.2%	8.4%
Armed robbery	17.8%	10.7%
Drug felony	14.2%	14.5%
Violent personal crimes **	10.8%	5.0%
Average number of counts	3.2	3.6
Felony class:		
First degree	25.0%	16.9%
Second degree	47.0%	49.6%
Third degree	28.0%	33.5%
Prior probation term	27.1%	30.2%
Prior Community Control term	12.1%	10.7%
Prior violation of probation		
or Community Control	21.7%	26.7%
Average sentence length	3.7	3.5

^{*} These are estimates based on samples

** These include murder, manslaughter, assault, and battery.

***Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department.

Measuring Up: Program Achievements of Boot Camp Graduates

"The boot camp program comprises a number of distinct facets such as physical training, drill and ceremony, work assignments, and counseling. Inmates are evaluated in each of these areas. To determine the achievements of boot camp graduates, we will review their performance measurements and appraisals.

In the course of the program, graduates changed physically in several ways. An average graduate lost nearly five pounds, reduced his waist by over an inch, increased his chest by more than half an inch, and lowered his heart rate by about twelve beats per minute. Graduates also demonstrated improved abilities to run, do push-ups, and do sit-ups." ¹¹ These improvements are specified in Table 5.

Table 5
Physical Changes in Boot Camp Graduates (N-281)

Average Initial	Average Final	Average
Measurement	Measurement	Change
160.78	155.64	-4.85
31.87	30.60	-1.03
37.16	37.77	+.62
73.21	61.11	-12.15
8.08	5.98	-2.11
47.02	<i>7</i> 1.11	+24.27
37.23	53.70	+16.58
	Initial Measurement 160.78 31.87 37.16 73.21 8.08 47.02	Initial Final Measurement Measurement 160.78 155.64 31.87 30.60 37.16 37.77 73.21 61.11 8.08 5.98 47.02 71.11

Appraisals in other aspects of the program are necessarily more subjective, with officers employing a rating scale of "below satisfactory," "satisfactory," "above satisfactory," and "outstanding". Generally, appraisals are made during the fourth and eight weeks of the program. Table 6 lists the average initial score, the average final score, and the average improvement for each evaluated performance area. In all of the areas graduates tended to begin with a slightly better than "satisfactory" rating and improved to one just below "above satisfactory."

* Table 6
Improvements in Performance Evaluations of Boot Camp Graduates (N=281)

	Average <u>First Score</u>	Average <u>Last Score</u>	Average <u>Improvement</u>
Drill	2.13	2.56	.43
Obstacle course	2.17	2.53	.36
Work	2.15	2.58	.43
Dress code	2.23	2.84	.61
Substance abuse tr	aining 2.23	2.81	.58
Rational-emotive			
therapy training	2.29	2.79	.49
Score Values	1 = Below satisfactory3 = Above satisfactory	2 = Satisfact 4 = Outstan	•

Distribution of the evaluations is shown in Table 7. In each of the performance areas we see an improvement between the first and the final appraisal such that over half of the graduates were rated at "above satisfactory" or "outstanding" in the second appraisal. We note also that the strongest areas of inmate performance were substance abuse training, rational-emotive therapy counseling, and conforming to dress requirements. The weakest performance areas were drill and ceremony, work assignments, and running the obstacle course.

What the evaluations tell us is that the overwhelming majority of boot camp graduates were judged by the evaluating officers to meet or exceed the basic requirements of the program. ¹²

^{*} Harris County Statisticians Department did the surveys.

Table 7

*** Performance Evaluations for Boot Camp Graduates (N=281)

	Below <u>Satisfactory</u>	Satisfactory	Above <u>Satisfactory</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>
<u>Drill</u>				
4th Week	2.2%	83.7%	13.4%	.7%
8th Week	4.4%	44.1%	42.3%	9.2%
Obstacle Course		•		
4th Week	3.6%	<i>77</i> .5%	17.0%	1.8%
8th Week	5.5%	43.8%	42.6%	8.1%
<u>Work</u>				
4th Week	2.9%	80.4%	15.6%	1.1%
8th Week	.7%	48.2%	43.4%	7.7%
Dress Code				
4th Week	6.9%	68.8%	18.5%	5.8%
8th Week	2.6%	31.6%	44.9%	21.0%
Substance Abuse Training				
4th Week	1.8%	76.4%	19.2%	2.5%
8th Week	.4%	27.9%	62.5%	9.2%
R.E.T. Training				
4th Week	2.2%	73.2%	18.5%	6.2%
8th Week	.7%	32.1%	55.0%	12.2%

^{***} Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department

Relapse: Prison Recommitments Among Boot Camp Graduates

"The effectiveness of the boot camp program rests upon the extent to which its goal (s) are achieved. One of those goals, the deterrence of repeat criminality, is of particular importance as both a public safety issue and a factor in the program's cost effectiveness. In this section we will consider repeat criminality indirectly by examining the frequency with which boot camp graduates are returning to prison. We will also explore some other aspects of reincarceration, including particularly the life circumstances of recommitted boot camp graduates." ¹³

"A. Quantitative Considerations

To begin to assess the deterrent impact of boot camp, we will compare reincarceration patterns of boot camp graduates and similar inmates who did not participate in the program. Any group differences will provide some indication of the relative impact of the boot camp experience versus traditional correctional programs.

To obtain a suitable comparison group, the Department of Corrections' computerized data base was searched to extract records of inmates meeting certain basic criteria:

- 1) Demographic and offense similarity to inmates admitted to boot camp.
- 2) Release from prison during the same period of time as the graduates of boot camp (late September 1991 through September 31, 1993).
- 3) Placement on felony probation or Community Control immediately following prison release as a condition of their original sentence.

On the basis of these criteria 633 inmates were selected for the comparison group. While this number is more than twice as large as the number of boot camp graduates (N=281), comparisons between the groups will employ recommitment rates, thus controlling for the difference in group size. We include no tests of statistical significance since, in the absence of an adequately specified explanatory model, such tests are not particularly informative.* Findings reported here are preliminary, subject to further theoretical and empirical development.

*Determining whether a relationship between variables is non random presupposes an identification of those variables, which is a theoretical matter. To test the significance of a relationship between loosely conceived, "global" concepts is necessarily to risk mistaking a spurious for a non-spurious relationship, or a spurious for a non-spurious non-relationship. Significance tests alone can not decide the issue. In the absence of a theoretical model of the boot camp experience, we therefore refrain from the premature and potentially misleading use of such tests.¹⁴

Accounting Prison Time Reduction

"Among the major goals of boot camp is a reduction of the time inmates spend in prison. Such reduction involves at least four different considerations:

- 1. Do boot camp graduates serve shorter terms of incarceration that they would have served if they had not participated in the program?
- 2. Is the reincarceration rate for boot camp graduates the same or lower than the rate for comparable inmates?
- 3. Do reincarceration boot camp graduates remain out of prison between commitments for equal or longer periods of time than comparable inmates?
- 4. Do reincarcerated boot camp graduates commit crimes of comparable or lesser seriousness than similar inmates, and therefore serve equal or shorter terms of incarceration on their second prison commitments?

In the previous section affirmative answers to the second and third questions were given: Table 8 showed that the overall recommitment rate for boot camp graduates was 2.5 percentage points lower than the rate for the comparison group, and Table 14 showed that recommitted boot camp graduates generally remained out of prison between commitments longer than comparable inmates. Now, to complete our assessment of boot camp's impact on prison time reduction, we must consider the first and fourth questions.

Unfortunately, at present we lack sufficient data to answer the fourth question. Missing is information on time served by reincarcernated boot camp graduates and comparable inmates who are still active in their second commitments. Since the awarding of gain time and release credits insures that practically no inmate serves a full judicial sentence, the only determination of incarceration time currently valid is a post-release computation of the length of the actual prison term.

Thus, only after recommitted members of our boot camp and comparison groups are released from their second commitments will time served data become available. Until then, we inevitably face a certain indeterminacy in our estimations of the impact of boot camp on prison time reduction.

In the remainder of this section we will focus on the question of whether boot camp shortens the initial prison term of its graduates. Our procedure involves a calculation of the prison time boot camp graduates would have served without boot camp, an estimation based upon the incarceration time of a group of similar inmates.

The following criteria were used to establish a comparison group:

- 1) Demographic and offense similarity to inmates admitted to boot camp
- 2) Release from state prison during the same period of time as the boot camp graduates (late September 1991 through September 31, 1993)
- 3) Admission to state prison during the operational period of boot camp.

Together these criteria drew a comparison group of 980 cases in a computerized database search. Information on time served by these inmates and by the boot camp graduates is presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Average Time Served (in Months) by Boot Camp
Graduates and Comparison Group

	Boot Camp Graduates (N=281)	Comparison Group (N=980)
County jail time	2.91	3.22
State prison time	5.24	7.06
Total incarceration time	0.15	10.28
Length of Sentence	44.97	32.11
Portion served in state prison	.13	.22
Total Portion served	.19	.32

The figures show that boot camp graduates, on the average, received sentences roughly a year longer than the inmates in the comparison group and yet served almost two months less in state prison. While the graduates served 19% of their sentences, the other inmates served 32%. The savings specific to state prison is indicated in the fact that state incarceration constituted 13% of the sentences of the boot camp graduates and 22% of the comparison inmates' sentences.

We should note that the time boot camp graduates spent in state prison was not all boot camp time, as Table 17 shows. On the average, graduates were incarcerated in state prison for almost two months prior to admission to the program. Boot camp time itself, averaging about three and a third months, represents slightly less than two-thirds of the total state prison time. While most graduates were released from prison immediately upon completion of the program, 21 spent additional time in community facilities. This time added nearly a month to the prison terms of these offenders.¹⁵

Table 17

"Average State Prison Time (in months)
for Boot Camp Graduates
(N=281)

Prison Time	Months		
 Pre-Boot Camp	1.83		
Boot Camp	3.35		
Post-Boot Camp	*		
Total State Prison Time	5.24		

^{*} Occurs in 21 cases. Average time for these cases in .82.

As an estimate of the initial prison time saved by boot camp, we note that if the program's graduates had spent the same portion of their sentences in state prison that the comparison group spent, approximately 39,759 inmate days would have been added to the state correctional system's load. The lower recommitment rate of boot camp graduates and their longer time interval between commitments suggest an additional savings in prison time beyond this initial reduction. Of course, we exclude the question of whether the added inmate load would have affected the awarding of gain time or release credits, a possibility which implies some lessening of the 39,759 day estimate.

Dollar cost benefits of boot camp are particularly difficult to determine. At present, no exact per diem inmate costs have been figured for boot camp. According to the Youthful Offender Program Office, operational costs of the program do not significantly differ from costs at other correctional institutions. The greater expense associated with a higher staff-inmate ratio is offset by lower costs of medical treatment, support personnel, etc.

As for attaching a dollar figure to the reduction of prison time achieved by boot camp, we confront the fact that the additional time the program's graduates would have served without the program cannot be viewed as having a uniform per diem cost. Considerable differences emerge over time, between major institutions, between community facilities and major institutions, and between community facilities themselves. These cost variations are such as to preclude any simple estimation of the dollar benefits of boot camp. A conservative estimate, using average per diem costs from fiscal year 1991-93 and allowing 90% of the additional time to be served at major institutions and 10% at community facilities, puts the cost savings of boot camp at about one and a quarter million dollars.¹⁷

Conclusion: Prospects, Problems, Policy

"The widespread current interest in shock incarceration stems from its alleged advantages in one or more of four areas:

1. Punishment

*The rigorousness of shock programs appears to restore a punitive dimension to incarceration, thereby satisfying popular demand for retributive justice.

2. Rehabilitation

In promoting self-discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and achievement, shock incarceration provides for a type of rehabilitation typically absent from alternative correctional programs.

3. **Deterrence**

As a result of its punitive and/or rehabilitative aspects, shock incarceration offers a possibility for improving the record of incarceration as a deterrent to criminality.

4. <u>Cost</u>

Given the macro-economics of contemporary corrections, where the cost of maintaining a burgeoning inmate population exceeds available resources, shock incarceration promises to cut expenses by reducing demand on prison facilities.¹⁷

Information addressing these claims has been provided throughout this report. Now, in summary, we will review that information to see whether Texas's boot camp program delivers on the popular expectations of shock incarceration.

The perceived punitive aspect of boot camp would presumably refer to its strenuous physical training and its strict military regimen. In these matters the program does differ from other types of in incarceration, and so can arguably be regarded as more punitive.

* Opinions from popular demand should be considered.

The rehabilitative aspect of boot camp is for the most part aimed at fostering self-discipline and improving individual decision-making. Some evidence exists to suggest that the program is effective in these areas, though the evidence is limited to the self-reported views of inmates and correctional officers and reincarcerated graduates (see above).

Clearly, more research into the rehabilitative aspect of boot camp is needed. On the other hand, the very limits of the rehabilitative intent raise some concern. The program does not comprise basic education, job training, or treatment for drug abuse (beyond basic counseling). Inmates with deficiencies in these areas will therefore leave boot camp with the same deficiencies. For some inmates, these unmet needs may well negate any rehabilitative success in other areas. Among the reincarcerated graduates that we surveyed, a majority, directly or indirectly, acknowledged problems with job training and alcohol/drug abuse. Perhaps release supervision programs can suitably address these needs, as was intended in the design and time frame of boot camp.

As a deterrent to repeat criminality, boot camp is at least as effective as alternative programs. Some evidence suggests that boot camp may have a deterrent impact for some types of offenders but not for others. As a group, though, the only area of superior performance by graduates of the program has been their reincarceration for technical violations of probation. This finding might reflect the self-discipline instilled at boot camp, which, in the absence of life skill deficits, would equip graduates to cope with the requirements of probation more effectively than other released inmates. We must continue to monitor reincarceration patterns to see whether this hypothesis has any merit.

The cost of boot camp represents perhaps its most successful aspect. We noted that the program is effectively reducing prison time.

Of the alleged advantages of shock incarceration in the areas of punishment, rehabilitation, deterrence, and cost, we see then that boot camp is meeting expectations most fully in the first and last of these, and somewhat less fully in the second and third. Can performance in these weaker areas be improved? We offer the following thoughts for policy consideration.

- 1. There is some question whether the current substance abuse counseling at boot camp is effective in meeting the needs of all inmates. Although we lack sufficient data to evaluate the counseling, we believe that the expressed views of recommitted graduates suggest that at least some inmates at boot camp need further help with drug problems. Underscoring the importance of addressing this need is the high correlation between criminality and substance abuse. We should consider incorporating within the boot camp agenda aspects of the multifaceted treatment program currently being conducted at other Department of Correction's institutions.
- 2. Current screening of candidates for boot camp could benefit from further research to better identify inmates most likely to benefit from the program. Such research might proceed from findings in this report--for example, by following up on the possibility that younger inmates are more strongly influenced by boot camp than some of the older youthful offenders.
- 3. Whatever variations of shock design may be implemented in the future, we believe that the current boot camp program has benefits which outweigh its limits. Yet these limits should not be ignored. In particular we are concerned that the transition faced by graduates of the program from a highly disciplined environment back to the community is too abrupt. To establish some continuity through the transition, the following recommendation is offered.

At boot camp a Community Liaison Office would be established one function of this office would be to provide weekly one-hour group training sessions beginning after an inmate had been in the program at least 30 days. Topics covered in the sessions would include educational and job opportunities available in the community, enrollment procedures in education/vocational training, and job applications procedures.

The Liaison Office would also work individually with each inmate who had been at boot camp at least 60 days to prepare a twelve month plan of action, incorporating specific job and/or educational projects to be undertaken upon graduation from boot camp. The plan of action would form the basis for a contract between the inmate and the Department of Corrections, with specific obligations for each: The inmate would agree to fulfill the plan, and the Department would agree in return to petition the sentencing judge for a termination of the offender's probation at the end of the twelfth month. Failure of the inmate to conform to the contract would possible return to prison. Conditions of the contract would be overseen by the offender's probation officer in telephone conversation with the Liaison Office at boot camp, which would also maintain (telephone) contact with the offender, monitoring his progress and providing supplementary counseling.

Though many details of this recommendation would have to be worked out, it appears to offer a number of benefits. The additional training and counseling of inmates, culminating in a contract offering specific rewards and punishments, should promote better post-release adjustment.

The idea of continuity in care and supervision is not new; rather, it is a cornerstone of correctional release policy. Officials in New York have recognized the importance of adapting this policy to the special needs of shock graduates by releasing them to a parole program called "After Shock". We believe that Texas's boot camp program could be strengthened by an improved follow-up component.

These recommendations arise out of our current understanding of boot camp as a correctional tool. Much remains to be learned. Despite some early signs of promise, the full potential of shock incarceration is not yet known.

An ongoing multi-state study by the National Institute of Justice promises to contribute further to our understanding of shock incarceration.

Table 8 presents the basic recommitment data for boot camp graduates and the comparison group. This average is based upon a six (6) month period. In viewing the offender counts according to the specific reasons for reincarceration, we note the following. The graduates and the comparison inmates show an equal rate of return to prison for commission of new felonies. The graduates are recommitted for new misdemeanors at a rate of 1.6% higher than that of the comparison inmates, although in neither group is the rate particularly high. The graduates are recommitted for technical violations of probation at a rate 4.2 percentage points lower than that of the comparison group. On the basis of this last difference, the total recommitment rate for boot camp graduates is 2.5 percentage points lower than the rate for similar inmates.

Table 8
Recommitments of Boot Camp Graduates and Comparison Group *

Reason For Recommitment	Boot Camp Graduates (N=281)	Comparison Group (N=633)
 New Felony	47 (16.7%)	106 (16.7%)
New Misdemeanor	6 (2.1%)	3 (.5%)
Technical Violation	18 (6.4%)	67 (10.6%)
Total	71 (25.3%)	176 (27.8%)

* Through September 30, 1993

The absence of a group difference in commission of new felonies requires closer examination. An argument might be made that, even within the framework of our matching procedure, exogenous dissimilarities in the composition of the graduate and control groups are masking a difference in felony rates. More specifically, sub-groups with different felony rates are represented in different proportions in the two groups so as to suppress a difference in their aggregated felony rates. To explore this possibility, we must introduce stratifications into our

comparison and consider both between-group and within-groups differences with respect to these stratifications.

Four factors potentially related to repeat criminality are original sentence length, original primary offense, age upon admission to prison, and race. Tables 9 through 12 provide stratifications for these factors in the felony rate comparison of the boot camp graduates and the matched inmate group.¹⁸

Table 9

*** New Felonies by Original Sentence Length

Sentence Length		Boot Camp Graduates (N=281)			Comparison Group (N=633)	
	Total N	New	Felonies	Total N	New	<u>Felonies</u>
		#	%		#	%
LE 1 Year	0		0	13	2	(15.4%)
GT 1 Yr/LE 2 Yrs	20	7	(35%)	201	33	(16.4%)
GT 2 Yrs/LE 3 Yrs.	72	11	(15.3%)	131	28	(21.4%)
GT 3 Yrs/LE 4 Yrs.	123	20	(16.3%)	270	38	(14.1%)
GT 4 Yrs/LE 5 Yrs.	43	7	(16.3%)	6	1	(16.7%)
GT 5 Yrs/LE 6 Yrs.	19	2	(10.5%)	6	3	(50.0%)
GT 6 Years	4	0	(0%)	6	1	(16.7%)

Table 10 New Felonies by Original Primary Offense

Original Felony Type		Boo	Boot Camp Graduates (N=281)			Comparison Group (N=633)	
<u>Tota</u>	<u>l N</u>	New Felonies		Total N	New Felonies		
			%		#	%	
Murder Manslaughter	11	1	(9.1%)	25	2	(8.0%)	
Violent Personal	19	4	(21.1%)	40	6		
Crimes							
Armed Robbery	50	7	(14.0%)	141	22	(15.6%)	
Unarmed Robbery	23	6	(26.1%)	46	12	(26.1%)	
Burglary	84	18	(21.4%)	197	46	(23.4%)	
Drug Offenses	40	3	(7.5%)	50	3	(6.0%)	
Larceny	12	2	(16.7%)	21	2	(9.5%)	
Auto Theft/Vehicle	19	3	(15.8%)	21	3	(14.3%)	
Crimes							
Other	23	3	(13.0%)	92	10	(10.9%)	

Table 11

*** New Felonies by Age at Prison Admission:

<u>Age</u>		<u>mp Gradı</u> N=281)	<u>1ates</u>	<u>Comparise</u> (N=	on Grou :633)	<u>up</u>
		New Felo			New Felo	, nies
	Total N	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	Total N	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
14	0	0	(.0%)	4	1	(25.0%)
15	4	0	(.0%)	14	3	(21.4%)
16	26	4	(15.4%)	81	21	(25.9%)
17	54	7	(13.0%)	182	37	(20.3%)
18	56	12	(21.4%)	179	23	(12.8%)
19	50	13	(26.0%)	<i>7</i> 7	15	(19.5%)
20	41	4	(9.8%)	63	4	(6.3%)
21	23	3	(13.0%)	26	1	(3.8%)
22	18	3	(16.7%)	4	0	(.0%)
23	5	0	(.0%)	3	1	(33.3%)
24	4	1	(25.0%)	0	0	(.0%)

Table 12

New Felonies by Race

Race	Boo	ot Camp (N=	Graduates 281)		Compariso (N=	
			New Felonies		Nev Felo	v nies
	Total N	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	Total N	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Black	145	31	(21.4%)	362	64	(17.7%)
White	132	15	(11.4%)	266	40	(15.0%)
Other	4	1	(25.0%)	5	2	(40.0%)

^{***} Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department.

The first question to consider is whether a difference in sub-group distributions within the boot camp and comparison groups is responsible for the lack of any difference in the group rates for commission of new felonies. As a statistical control on different sub-group distributions, the aggregated felony rate of the comparison group was recalculated by averaging sub-group rates according to their proportional representation in the graduate group. Table 13 provides the results. We see little change in the weighted felony rate after corrections in the distribution of original primary offense and race, and some change after distribution corrections for sentence length and age. What this suggests is the possibility that different distributions of sentences length and age sub-groups within the boot camp and comparison groups are masking a difference in the repeat felony rates of the groups. Yet, given the fact that the average for the weighted felony rates of both factors is little different from the overall unweighed group average, one factor may be negating another. The conclusion to be drawn is that distribution differences in the four factors examined do not, as a group, account for a lack of difference in felony rates of boot camp graduates and the comparison group. Of course, other factors not examined might lead to a different conclusion.

Table 13

Weighted New Felony Rates by Weighting Factor
For Comparison Group
(N=633)

Weighting Factor	Recalculated <u>Felony Rate</u>
Sentence Length	19.0%
Original Primary Offense	16.4%
Age at Prison Admission	14.5%
Race	16.7%

The absence of any difference in repeat criminality among boot camp graduates and similar inmates is not constant across all sub-groups. For some of the sub-groups the felony rate for boot camp graduates is lower than that for the comparison group. These sub-groups most prominently include inmates having sentences between two and three years, inmates who were 16 or 17 upon admission to prison, and inmates who are white. Sub-groups where boot camp graduates performed more poorly than the comparison group include inmates with sentences between one year and two years, inmates convicted of violent personal crimes or larceny, inmates older than 17 upon admission to prison, and inmates who are black. Subject to further specification and statistical tests for randomness, these sub-group differences suggest that the boot camp program may have a deterrent impact for at least some kinds of offenders. Further research is needed to assess this possibility.

The boot camp graduates reincarcerated on new felonies are tending to extend the scope of their criminality beyond the offenses of their original prison commitments. Viewing offenses within the categories of Texas's Sentencing Guidelines, we find that only 31.9% of the repeat felons remain within the Guidelines' categories of their original crimes, while more than two-thirds (68.1%) commit new Guidelines' offenses. This latter group comprises 42.6% with only new offenses and 25.5% with both old and new crimes.

Another issue in the analysis of recommitments is the length of time after release that an inmate refrains from criminal activity. In Table 14 the average number of months of "good" behavior is listed for all recommitted inmates in both the boot camp and comparison groups. For inmates recommitted on new felonies, there is little difference between the groups in the average period of the time between release and commission of a new offense. Differences emerge for inmates recommitted on new misdemeanors and technical probation revocations. In the former case, boot camp graduates maintain "good" behavior nearly three months longer than similarly recommitted inmates in the comparison group, while boot camp graduates recommitted on technical violations of probation remain

unviolated over two months longer than the comparable inmates. Taken as an aggregate, boot camp graduates recommitted to state prison average half a month more of "good" behavior than recommitted inmates in the comparison group.

Table 14

Average Months of "Good" Behavior After Release *

Reason for Recommitment	Boot Camp <u>Graduates</u> (N=281)	Comparison <u>Group</u> (N=633)
New Felony	4.5	4.7
New Misdemeanor	7.9	4.9
Technical Violation	8.5	6.3
Total	5.8	5.3

^{*} Inmates recommitted through September 30, 1993

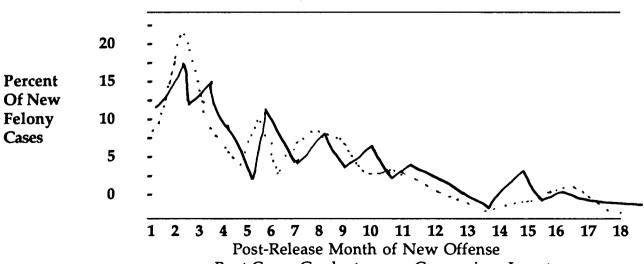
Further analysis of the "failure time" for recommitted boot camp graduates reveals some definite patterns. Table 15 provides the number and rate for each type of failure (new felony, misdemeanor, or technical revocation) according to the post-release month in which the failure occurred. For technical revocations we find an essentially "flat" distribution over a period of eighteen months, implying the absence of any particular critical time within that interval. By contrast, new felonies are highly time clustered, with 57.7% occurring within the first eight months. Chart 2 shows the general downward slope for commission of new felonies in both the boot camp and comparison groups. Clearly, the first eight months after release represent a particularly critical period in the survival prospects of the boot camp graduates.

Table 15
Time of Failure or Recommitted Boot Camp Graduates

Month	<u>Nev</u> (N=	v Felony 47)	<u>New Misd</u> (N=		Technical (N=	Revocation 18)
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1	6	(12.8%)	0		0	
2	8	(17.0%)	0		1	(5.6%)
3	6	(12.8%)	0		1	(5.6%)
4	7	(14.9%)	0		1	(5.6%)
5	4	(8.5%)	0		1	(5,6%)
6	3	(6.4%)	1	(16.7%)	3	(16.7%)
7	1	(2.1%)	2	(33.3%)	0	
8	4	(8.5%)	0		1	(5.6%)
9	2	(4.3%)	2	(33.3%)	1	(5.6%)
10	1	(2.1%)	0		2	(11.1%)
11	2	(4.3%)	0		4	(22.2%)
12	0		1	(16.9%)	1	(5.6%)
13	1	(2.1%)	0		0	
14	1	(2.1%)	0		0	
15	0		0		0	
16	1	(2.1%)	0		0	
17	0		0		1	(5.6%)
18	0		0		1	(5.6%)

Chart 2

Failure Curve For Boot Camp Graduates and Comparison Inmates With New Felonies



Boot Camp Graduates - - - Comparison Inmates

B. <u>Life Circumstances of Recommitted Boot Camp Graduates</u>

The behavioral data on reincarceration rates and failure times tell us what is happening, but not why. We still need to make sense of the data by acquiring some insight into the reasons that Boot Camp graduates have returned to prison. For that purpose, a questionnaire was designed and administered to reincarcerated graduates in the fall of 1993. Of the 53 inmates available for completing the survey, 36 (67.9%) responded. The absence of response in 17 cases is due to our lack of success in contacting the inmates rather than their refusal to participate.

The survey concentrated on a core of themes believed to be pertinent to reincarceration: The Boot Camp experience, employment, family, friends, probation, and prison in general. For each of these we will summarize the findings of the questionnaire. Item by item results are provided in Appendix 1.

1) The Boot Camp Experience

Reincarcerated Boot Camp graduates reported a strong positive opinion of Boot Camp. Nearly all of them expressed pride over successfully completing the program. Most believed that Boot Camp had changed their basic attitudes and had helped them develop self-discipline. The respondents generally denied the inapplicability of the Boot Camp experience to life outside prison, agreed that other prisons should be more like Boot Camp, and denied that the program was too short to do much good. Respondents also acknowledged respect for the Correctional officers at Boot Camp and denied that the only good thing about the program was its reduction of their prison time. Most of the reincarcerated graduates would prefer Boot Camp to their current correctional institution.

In several areas respondents expressed some critical views. Confirming the continued usefulness of rational-emotive therapy techniques, the graduates advised an expanded emphasis on counseling at Boot Camp. Despite the inclusion of alcohol and drug counseling as a component of the Boot Camp program, a large majority of the recommitted graduates saw a need for further substance abuse treatment. They also wanted job training. Despite these perceived deficiencies in the program content, respondents had not felt at the time of leaving Boot Camp that they would ever return to prison.

2) Employment

Upon leaving Boot Camp, unemployment was a real problem for half of the reincarcerated graduates. While respondents overwhelmingly affirmed a belief in the value of hard work, a majority confessed to lacking the skills required for the jobs they really wanted.

3) Family and Friends

Family problems do not appear to be particularly pressing for the respondents. Most acknowledged family support and denied any worsening of the family situation after return from Boot Camp. Only a minority of the reincarcerated graduate (27.8%) represent "second generation" inmates.

As for peer contacts, substantial number of the respondents (47.3%) reported that most of their friends had been in trouble with the law. Still, the majority of reincarcerated graduates denied that it is difficult to stay out of trouble on the streets.

4) Probation

The probation* supervision that Boot Camp graduates faced upon release seems to have left mixed impressions. While a solid majority denied that doing probation was easy, most respondents also denied that their probation officers were too demanding. The reincarcerated graduates were divided in admitting to a difficulty meeting cost of supervision payments, and they were also divided in reacting to the view that probation is just meaningless paperwork, though more of the respondents agreed with that opinion than disagreed. Only a minority of the reincarcerated graduates believed that their probation officers became well acquainted with them. Note again that these respondents were all graduates of Boot Camp who had violated probation and been recommitted to state prison.

5) Prison in General

Incarceration was still considered a significant event by the overwhelming majority of respondents. By the same majority, the respondents retained a belief in the effectiveness of prison programs for promoting personal change.

In weighing the results of the survey, we must bear in mind both the small size of the sample and the usual reliability and validly concerns associated with survey data. The following composite scenario suggests some possible factors associated with the repeat criminality of Boot Camp graduation.

Upon release from Boot Camp, the reincarcerated graduates held a strong positive view of the program, perceiving it as having enhanced their self-discipline and their psychological ability to cope with life. But the graduates also felt a need for further treatment of alcohol and drug abuse problems and for training in job skills. Most of the graduates were simply to satisfied that their skills qualified them for the jobs they really wanted. In the community, half the group experienced unemployment. Many of the graduates held peer associations with person positive impression on the graduates.¹⁹

^{*} Graduates of Boot Camp are most frequently placed on felony probation; sometimes they are placed on Community Control, a more intensive supervision program.

Appendix 1
Results of Survey of Reincarcerated Boot Camp Graduates (N=36)

		(00HZI)				
		Strongly		Neither Agree Nor		Strongly
	Item	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	5
 -:	I'm proud of the fact that I graduated from Boot Camp.	77.8%	16.7%	5.6%		,
75	When I left Boot Camp I didn't think I would ever go back to prison.	75.0%	13.9%	8.3%	2.8%	
က်	I don't think Boot Camp really changed my basic attitudes.	5.6%	8.3%	2.6%	55.6%	25.0%
4	The Boot Camp program would have been better if more time had been spent on counseling.	36.1%	36.1%	11.1%	16.7%	
	When something bothers me, I still try to R.E.T. it.	38.9%	44.4%	8.3%	5.6%	2.8%
9.	What I learned at Boot camp just doesn't apply to life outside prison.	5.6%	16.7%	11.1%	47.2%	19.4%
7.	Boot Camp needs to offer job training.	38.9%	36.1%	16.7%	8.3%	
∞ .	Boot Camp helped me develop selfdiscipline.	55.6%	38.9%	2.8%	2.8%	
9.	Other prisons ought to be more like Boot Camp.	36.1%	27.8%	19.4%	5.6%	11.1%
10.	The Boot Camp program was too short to do much good.	11.1%	2.8%	25.0%	50.0%	11.1%
11.	What Boot Camp needs is a treatment program for drug and alcohol abuse.	36.1%	36.1%	13.9%	11.1%	2.8%
12.	If I could, I would rather serve my time in Boot Camp than where I am now.	38.9%	16.7%	13.9%	25.0%	5.6%
13.	The officers at Boot Camp earned my respect.	52.8%	25.0%	13.9%	5.6%	2.8%

Notes

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- ² Kae M. Warnock, U.S. Department of Justice, Legislative Report, <u>Prison Boot Camps: Policy Considerations and Options</u>, March 1991.
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- Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department, <u>Court's Regimented Intensive Probation Program</u>, Revised April 1993.
- ⁷ ibid.
- ⁸ ibid.
- 9 ibid.
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